APPARATUS FOR REMOVING TOXIC MATERIAL FROM TOXIC WEAPON PROJECTILES

by

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FIELD OF THE INVENTION

This invention relates generally to apparatuses for removing toxic materials from loaded chemical weapon projectiles.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

The removal of toxic materials from toxic weapon projectiles, such as chemical weapon projectiles, is a major problem for all nations having aging toxic weapons. Typically, the toxic materials within such projectiles are extremely lethal and cannot be dealt with except under extremely secured conditions.

Many of the toxic materials used in toxic chemical weapon projectiles are liquid in form. For such projectiles, prior methods for removing the toxic material from the projectiles generally entail disposing a suction tube into the toxic agent cavity of the projectiles and vacuuming out the toxic material from the cavity. The problems with such methods are several-fold. First of all, the methods are of no use where some or all of the toxic materials are non-liquid in form. This is a considerable problem because many of the liquid toxic materials tend to coagulate with age and form large solid masses within the toxic agent cavity. Secondly, such prior art methods do nothing towards removing the considerable amount of toxic materials which continue to adhere to the interior walls of the projectile.

Accordingly, there is a need for an apparatus for removing toxic materials from toxic weapon projectiles which avoids these problems in the prior art in a simple, inexpensive and efficient manner.

SUMMARY

The invention satisfies this need. The invention is an apparatus useful in the removal of toxic material from a toxic weapon projectile having a casing, a burster well, a base and an ogive. The apparatus comprises a) a base, b) a projectile retaining container disposed on the base for accepting and retaining the ogive of a toxic weapon projectile, the projectile retaining container having a projectile retainer opening, a ram opening and a drain opening, c) a ram disposed on the base and extending upwards through the ram opening into the projectile retaining container, the ram including a ram head having one or more spray nozzles, the ram being extendible and retractable between (1) a retracted ram position wherein the ram is disposed proximate to the ram opening, and (2) an extended ram position wherein the ram is disposed distal to the ram opening; d) a projectile retainer opening seal for sealing the ogive of a toxic weapon projectile within the projectile retaining opening; and e) a ram opening seal for

sealing the ram within the ram opening.

DRAWINGS

These features, aspects and advantages of the present invention will become better understood with regard to the following description, appended claims and accompanying figures where:

Figure 1 is a cross-sectional view of a typical toxic weapon projectile useable in the apparatus of the invention;

Figure 2 is a perspective of an apparatus of the invention useful in the removal of toxic materials from toxic weapon projectiles;

Figure 3 is a perspective view of the apparatus illustrated in Figure 2 showing a chemical weapon projectile initially mounted in the apparatus;

Figure 4 is a perspective view of the apparatus illustrated in Figure 3 shown with the projectile rigidly secured within the apparatus;

Figure 5 is a perspective of the apparatus and projectile illustrated in Figure 4 showing the ram portion of the apparatus fully extended into the projectile;

Figure 6 is a cross-sectional diagram schematically illustrating the interior portions of the projectile retaining container used in the apparatus illustrated in Figures 2-5;

Figure 7 is a perspective, exploded view of the ram useable in the apparatus

illustrated in Figures 2-5;

Figure 8 is a side view of the ram useable in the apparatus illustrated in Figures 2-5;

Figure 9 is a plan view of the ram illustrated in Figure 8;

Figure 10 is a cross-sectional side view of the ram illustrated in Figure 9, taken along lines 10-10;

Figure 11A is a perspective cutaway view of a projectile showing how the ram crushes the interior components of the projectile as it extends upwardly;

Figure 11B is a perspective cutaway view of the projectile illustrated in Figure 11A showing how the projectile is rotated while the interior of the projectile is washed with high pressure washing fluid;

Figure 11C is a perspective cutaway view of the projectile illustrated in Figures 11A and 11B showing the interior of the projectile after the ram is retracted therefrom; and

Figure 12 is a front view of the apparatus illustrated in Figures 2-5.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

The following discussion describes in detail one embodiment of the invention and several variations of that embodiment. This discussion should not be construed, however, as limiting the invention to those particular embodiments. Practitioners skilled in the art will

recognize numerous other embodiments as well.

The invention is directed to the removal of toxic materials **1** from a toxic weapon projectile **2** such as illustrated in Figure 1. A typical toxic weapon projectile **2** has a steel outer casing **3** and a centrally disposed burster well **4**. The burster well **4** and the outer steel casing **3** cooperate together to define and seal off a toxic agent cavity **5**. When the projectile **2** is ready to be detoxified, the projectile's conical fuse has been removed from the ogive **6** of the projectile **2** and all explosive material has been removed from the burster well **4**. The removal of the projectile's conical fuse leaves a central opening **7** in the ogive **6**.

The invention is a unique apparatus **10** and a method for using the apparatus **10**. The apparatus **10** comprises a base **12**, a projectile retaining container **14** and a ram **16**.

The base **12** can be of any suitable size and shape capable of retaining a toxic weapon projectile **2**, the projectile retaining container **14** and the ram **16** during operation. Typically, the base **12** is made with steel structural components.

The projectile retaining container **14** is disposed on the base **12** and is adapted for accepting and retaining the ogive **6** of a toxic weapon projectile **2**. The projectile retaining container **14** defines a projectile retainer opening **18**, a ram opening **20** and a drain opening **22**. The projectile retaining container **14** is best understood by reference to Figure 6.

The projectile retaining container **14** also includes a projectile retainer opening seal **24** for sealing the ogive **6** of a toxic weapon projectile **2** within the projectile retaining opening **18**. In the embodiment illustrated in the drawings, the projectile retainer opening seal **24** is provided by a liner **26** disposed within the interior of the projectile retaining container **14**. The liner **26** is typically made from a fluorocarbon polymer, such as polytetrafluoroethylene, marketed by the DuPont Company of Wilmington, Delaware under the Teflon® trademark.

The liner **26** is retained within the projectile retaining container **14** by a liner retention ring **28**. Preferably, the liner **26** is biased towards the top of the projectile retaining container **14** by springs **30** or other biasing means disposed between the liner retention ring **28** and the liner **26**.

A resilient gasket **32**, such as a rubber gasket, is attached to the bottom of the liner **26** to provide a primary means for preventing toxic material from upwardly escaping through the projectile retainer opening **18** along the sides of the ogive **6**. Preferably, the interface between the ogive **6** and the liner **26** also forms a tortuous path to further impede the escape of toxic material from the projectile retainer opening **18**.

The ram **16** is disposed on the base **12** and extends into the ram opening **20** in the projectile retaining container **14**. The ram **16** is extendable and retractable between (1) a retracted ram position wherein the ram **16** is disposed proximal to the ram opening **20**, and (2) an extended ram position wherein the ram **16** is disposed distal to the ram opening **20**. In a typical embodiment, the travel distance between the retracted ram position and the extended ram position is between about 4 1/8 inches and 6 5/8 inches.

The ram **16** includes a ram head **34** which comprises a ram head cap **36** retained on the ram **16** by a ram head cap bolt **38**.

The diameter of the ram **16** is chosen to closely match the diameter of the central opening **7** in the ogive **6** of the projectile **2** into which the ram **16** will be extended. For example, where the projectile **2** is a 105 mm projectile or a 155 mm projectile, the diameter of the central opening **7** in the ogive **6** is 1.845 inches. For these projectiles **2**, the diameter of the ram **16** is chosen in one embodiment to be about 1.75 inches, leaving an annulus between the ram **16** and the central opening **7** in the ogive **6** of less than about 0.05 inches, for example about 0.047 inches. Choosing the diameter of the ram **16** to match the central opening **7** in the ogive **6** in this manner, effectively prevents the escape of any large

coagulant particles within the toxic materials **1** from the projectile **2** along the ram **16** and into the projectile retaining container **14**. This aspect of the invention is significant because it precludes the necessity for specialized downstream equipment to collect and process large coagulant particles.

The ram **16** is adapted with appropriate hydraulic equipment **40** to extend upwardly and retract downwardly. In a typical embodiment, the ram **16** is designed to deliver at least about 100 tons of force across the ram head **34**. In operation, the ram **16** typically delivers between about 50 tons of force and 60 tons of force during the time the ram **16** is used to crush the burster well **4** of the projectile **2** (as described below).

Preferably, the ram **16** includes one or more spray nozzles **42** capable of accepting washing fluid at pressures in excess of 5,000 psig and dispensing such washing fluid at high velocities.

As can be most easily seen in Figure 6, a ram opening seal **44** is disposed within the ram opening **20** to seal the ram **16** to the projectile retaining container **14**.

Preferably, the apparatus **10** further comprises a rotator **46** for rotating a toxic weapon projectile **2** retained within the projectile retaining container **14**. In the embodiment illustrated in the drawings, the rotator **46** comprises a drive wheel capable of contacting the exterior of a toxic weapon projectile **2** disposed within the apparatus **10** and rotating such projectile **2** about its longitudinal axis. The apparatus further comprises a plurality of idler wheels **47** to help retain the projectile **2** in place during its rotation.

The apparatus **10** also preferably comprises a projectile base end retainer member **48** for rigidly retaining a toxic weapon projectile **2** within the apparatus **10**. The projectile base end retainer member **48** is best seen in Figures 2-5. Figures 4 and 5 illustrate

the projectile base end retainer member **48** disposed in a first retainer member position wherein the projectile base end retainer member **48** is directly above the projectile retaining container **14** so as to contact the base end **50** of the projectile **2** disposed within the projectile retaining container **14** and to rigidly retain the projectile **2** with the projectile retaining container **14**. Figures 2 and 3 illustrate the projectile base end retainer member **48** in a second retainer member position wherein the projectile base end retainer member **48** is not disposed directly above the projectile retaining container **14**, so as to facilitate the installation and uninstallation of a toxic weapon projectile **2** into and from the apparatus **10**.

In operation, the projectile base end retainer member **48** is moved to the second retainer member position and a toxic weapon projectile **2**, without fuse and explosive materials, is disposed downwardly into the projectile retaining container **14**. The projectile base end member **48** is then moved to the first retainer member position, whereby the projectile base end retainer member **48** firmly retains the projectile **2** within the apparatus **10**.

The ram **16** is then extended from the retracted ram position towards the extended ram position. As the ram **16** extends towards the extended ram position, it pushes upwardly into the toxic weapon projectile **2**. As the ram **16** pushes upwardly into the toxic weapon projectile **2**, it crushes the burster well **4**, as illustrated in Figures 11A-11C. As this occurs, the toxic material **1** within the toxic agent cavity **5** is released and gravitates downwardly out through the open lower end of the projectile **2** and into the projectile retaining container **14**, from where it is removed from the projectile retaining container **14** via the drain opening **22**.

After the ram **16** has crushed the burster well **4** as illustrated in Figure 11C, it is withdrawn towards the retracted ram position a short distance of between about one quarter inch and about one inch, typically about one half inch by retracting the ram **16**. By retracting the ram **16**, the ram **16** tends to become disengaged from the burster well **4**, allowing the

projectile **2** to rotate. Thereafter, high pressure water or other suitable washing fluid is sprayed from the one or more spray nozzles **42** in the ram **16** to effectively break up most all coagulated toxic materials **1** and to thoroughly flush most remaining toxic materials **1** from the interior walls of the projectile **2**. As the high pressure washing fluid is emitted from the one or more spray nozzles **42**, the projectile **2** is rotated by the rotator **46** so that extreme turbulence is generated throughout the entirety of the toxic materials **1** (to break up most all coagulant particles), and so that all portions of the interior walls of the projectile **2** are thoroughly flushed with washing fluid. All of the washing fluid gravitates out of the projectile **2** and into the projectile retaining container **14** from where it is removed via the drain opening **22**. Because the diameter of the ram **16** is chosen to closely match the diameter of the central opening **7** in the ogive **6**, the annulus between the ram **16** and the central opening **7** is very small, so that only very small particles can escape into the projectile retaining container **14**. In embodiments wherein the difference between the diameter of the ram **16** and the central opening **7** is less than about 0.1 inch, generally only particles of 0.05 inch or smaller can escape into the projectile retaining container **14**.

After the projectile **2** has been flushed in the manner described above, the projectile **2** retains less than about 2% (by weight), typically less than about 0.1% (by weight), of its initial toxic material pay load. Thereafter, the projectile base end retainer member **48** is moved from the first retainer member position to the second retainer member position and the projectile **2** is removed from the apparatus **10** for further detoxification.

The invention provides a simple but reliable apparatus and method for removing most of the toxic materials from toxic weapon projectiles.

Having thus described the invention, it should be apparent that numerous structural modifications and adaptations may be resorted to without departing from the scope and fair meaning of the instant invention as set forth hereinabove.